

**TOWN OF ROCKY HILL
PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE
MEETING OF JULY 20, 2015**

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairwoman Nadine Bell called the July 20, 2015 Public Safety Committee meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers of Rocky Hill Town Hall, 761 Old Main Street, Rocky Hill, CT.

Those in attendance: Councilor Frank Szeps. Also present: Guy Scaife (Director of Public Safety/Town Manager), Chief Mike Garrahy (RHFD), Assistant Chief Dave Kromas (RHFD), Fire Marshal Rich Renstrom, Chief Mike Custer (RHPD), Councilor Joe Kochanek, Councilor Meg Casasanta, Christa and Sophie Mariner (Residents of R.H.) and Dave Drury (*Hartford Courant*).

Those absent: Councilor Bill MacDonald and Chief Joe Grayeb (RHVAA).

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Councilor Szeps made a motion to approve the Minutes of the June 15, 2015 meeting of the Public Safety Committee. The motion was seconded by Deputy Mayor Bell and adopted unanimously by those present.

III. MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Councilor Kochanek said he had been at this Committee's meeting a few weeks ago with his concern about drugs in Town. He has been reading in the newspaper how drug abuse has been going up 130% nationwide, with the largest group being middle class women. This is due to oxycodone, etc., being overprescribed and doctors have been told to cut back on that. The scary part is that heroin is cheaper than medication is. Rocky Hill used to have an Undercover Drug Division. He asked if it is true that they don't have this anymore and he asked how the drug problem around Town is handled. Chief Custer said the RHPD had a Police Officer who had been assigned to the Narcotics Task Force full time. There had been a five Town initiative originally and then it ended up just being Wethersfield and Rocky Hill but the Police Officer spent more time doing Wethersfield cases. A decision was made to pull that Police Officer from that but the understanding was that the narcotics use in Town would be tracked. The Detective Bureau handles any cases like that presently. Councilor Kochanek asked if it wasn't a fact that the Undercover Agent was able to more easily locate the people in Town who are trying to sell drugs to the Rocky Hill citizens because they weren't in uniform. Chief Custer said they get information from the Narcotics Unit and anonymous calls are made to Detectives also. Councilor Kochanek asked if they don't need a Police Officer in Town for drugs because they don't have a problem. Chief Custer said the drug activity is being monitored at this point and

Town Manager Scaife is kept up-to-date on this. A full time Police Officer will be brought back if it is felt one is needed to investigate these types of incidents. Councilor Kochanek asked Chief Custer if his opinion is that there is no issue at this time and he said that is correct. Councilor Kochanek just wanted to bring this to their attention and he said sometimes it is better to be proactive instead of reactive for something like this that could ruin people's lives.

Town Manager Scaife said he wasn't comfortable talking about the actions that may or may not be taken relative to undercover capabilities. He told Councilor Kochanek that because of his official status as a Councilor, they will be glad to talk to him in a private session to tell him what their capabilities are. Town Manager Scaife said they are not limited to what they can do because that person isn't assigned to that Force. They had a person that another community was benefitting more from because they were spending close to three-quarters of their time there. Their Detective group, which is sizeable, can go undercover at any time.

Councilor Kochanek doesn't think that Rocky Hill is immune to this. He feels better that there is a proactive program. Town Manager Scaife said they read the same statistics and they have ongoing efforts continuously to deal specifically with the ever growing problem of drugs.

Councilor Casasanta understood that the All Night Parking Ordinance was going to be discussed at this evening's meeting so this might be her only opportunity, outside of the Town Council meeting later this evening, to ask some of the questions she had that they might consider answering. She wanted to know from a public safety standpoint, what other mechanisms are in place to alleviate any concerns about compromising public safety (i.e. if cars are parked on a narrow road on both sides) so that they will have a complete understanding of why this Ordinance is being considered to be removed. Chairwoman Bell asked Councilor Casasanta if it was okay for them to hold off on answering this until they got to that agenda item this evening and she said absolutely.

Christa Mariner, 58 Farms Village Road, R.H., wanted to expand upon the excellent comments from Councilor Kochanek. Christa Mariner knew that the Undercover Officer they once had was also able to work with troubled youth. CNN had done a very dramatic documentary last year about the "Heroin Highway", which is the stretch of I-91 between Greenfield MA and Northampton MA. The Greenfield Police are overwhelmed. Today's heroin user is completely different from the one in the past. Nowadays it can be a high school quarterback who gets injured and gets some OxyContin. She is concerned about the growth of drug use in Rocky Hill for all reasons and because of its proximity to the highway. She also said that it is good to be proactive rather than reactive.

IV. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION

A. Parking All Night Parking Ordinance – Article IV §230-14 and §230-16 (b)

Guy Scaife said he had raised this item at a previous meeting and he had suggested that there be a public hearing on this. He has had an overwhelming number of citizens come forward to say they are appreciative that this is being brought forward. They believe that the majority of people aren't aware that this Ordinance exists and Staff believes that too. The Police Chief, Fire Chief

and Public Works Director are the key people with regards to this and they can't identify a legitimate reason as to why this Ordinance is still on the books. Four hundred and thirty-five Citations were issued in this past year. It is time to take a second look at this because when someone is sitting in front of the individuals who receive these, they can't give a good reason as to why they did. He told the Councilors that they have a letter in their packets that Chief Custer authored and this reiterated what he said basically. (Please see the Attachment.) He asked Chief Custer and/or Chief Garrahy to speak about their official position on this.

Chief Garrahy said the RHFD doesn't have enforcement capabilities and the Ordinances they are concerned with are still in place with regards to no parking within ten feet of a fire hydrant; no parking within twenty-five feet of a stop sign; no parking within twenty-four feet of an intersection; and parking no more than twelve inches from a curb. This gives them the working room they need to get the apparatus down the road. The narrow streets and driveways are covered by fire lanes on all of the private properties. Those fire lanes are enforced by the RHPD. The three hour block of 2:00 a.m. to 5:00 a.m. in the All Night Parking Ordinance won't affect the RHFD's effectiveness or performance.

Chief Custer has been wondering for years why this Ordinance, which has been in existence for over forty years, has been on the books. He learned at a Staff meeting recently that his public safety colleagues had the same feeling. This Ordinance only restricts parking on a street for three hours. He referred to Councilor Casasanta's question and he said they still have plenty of legal resources they can use to address vehicles, which are a hazard, etc., that are parked on public roads in Rocky Hill if this Ordinance was to be removed. Chief Custer said there is a State Statute and other Town Ordinances they can rely on to have vehicles towed if necessary or ticketed. There is a State law that allows them to remove abandoned vehicles on public roads. There is also a Parking Ban. If there is a problem spot or if individuals are abusing this if the Ordinance ends up being removed then this can always be addressed with the owners. Restrictive or limited signage can be introduced to address the problem areas if worse comes to worse. He feels confident that they will be able to address any kind of parking issues or concerns that arise in Rocky Hill.

Councilor Szeps referred to the four criteria that Chief Garrahy had mentioned and he asked if that was a Statute or a Town Ordinance. Chief Custer said all of those are covered under Town Ordinance 230-16 and others as well are included in this.

Chairwoman Bell said safety issues are addressed for safety's sake and not because it is between 2:00 a.m. and 5:00 a.m. Chief Custer said correct and referred to how Town Manager Scaife mentioned that this has also created a lot of ill will for Rocky Hill citizens when they receive tickets for this Ordinance because they weren't even aware of it and they feel it isn't fair. It makes sense to remove this.

Chairwoman Bell told Town Manager Scaife that she assumed a formal motion wasn't needed for this to have it moved on to the Town Council. Town Manager Scaife said correct but he believes that the Town Council wanted this Committee's input.

Councilor Szeps made a motion to recommend to the Town Council the removal of Article IV §230-14 in the All Night Parking Ordinance. The motion was seconded by Deputy Mayor Bell and adopted unanimously by those present.

V. DEPARTMENTAL UPDATES

A. Fire

Chief Garrahy said the RHFD responded to 69 incidents in June, with a year-to-date total of 357. There were 405 training hours, with a year-to-date total of almost 2,100. There were 171 administrative hours, with a year-to-date total of a little over 1,600. There were no injuries and the year-to-date total is 1. There are 22 members at Station #1, 14 members at Station #2, 16 at Station #3, 8 members in the Fire Police and 10 members in the Staff. From their recruiting initiative, 5 new firefighters have started and 5 more, along with 3 Cadets, are in the recruitment process. Chairwoman Bell asked Chief Garrahy if he found this has coincided with the public relations campaign and the posters, etc. Chief Garrahy said this was part of that and it seems to be working well. They learned quite a bit from tapping into the National Initiative to find out what is working for other people and what isn't. Chairwoman Bell said good job.

Chairwoman Bell asked if the IT issues are going smoothly. Assistant Chief Kromas said they are in the middle of migrating to the Cloud based Firehouse Software and this should be completed hopefully within the next thirty to sixty days. He is working with Sergeant Phelps of the RHPD and the dispatchers for the NexGen dispatching. Chairwoman Bell asked Assistant Chief Kromas if he is getting the support he needs and he said definitely.

B. Ambulance

No one was present from the RHVAA.

C. Police

Chief Custer said 2,250 calls for service were received at the Dispatch Center in June for the RHFD, RHPD and RHVAA. Forty-eight criminal arrests were made and 74 motor vehicle accidents were investigated. Seven DUI arrests were made and there were 110 infractions issued. There were 206 warnings and 48 Town tickets issued.

There were no medical or fire calls in June at 60 West Street. There was one Police call, which was a 911 hang up, but there ended up being no incident after this had been checked out. There are 19 residents there from the Department of Corrections and 32 residents from Mental Health and Addiction Services.

There is one Police Officer who is out on Maternity Leave and is expected back on September 1, 2015. There are 2 Dispatcher vacancies that they are in the process of filling. Two of the 3 new recruits have come off of their field training and the last one is in his final month.

Chief Custer said August will be the “second prong” of their Distracted Driving Campaign”, which is part of the State of Connecticut Department of Transportation Grant. The RHPD will be out in full force for that.

Chairwoman Bell asked if many more issues have been seen with the using of the streets in Rocky Hill due to the closing of the Putnam Bridge. Chief Custer said there is nothing that has created a problem thus far.

VI. OTHER

There was nothing else to be discussed.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Councilor Szeps made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:25 p.m. The motion was seconded by Deputy Mayor Bell and adopted unanimously by those present.

Respectfully submitted,

Jo-Anne Booth
Recording Secretary